

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
OF THE
ST. ALBANS
URBAN SANITARY DISTRICT

FOR THE YEAR 1902,

BY

JOHN MORISON,

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&c., &c.



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St. Albans Urban Sanitary District
For the Year 1902.

TO THE MAYOR AND CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF
ST. ALBAN.

GENTLEMEN,

During the year 1902 there have been 206 deaths within the City of St. Alban, 83 of males and 123 of females. There were 45 deaths in the Abbey district, 82 in St. Peter's, 26 in St. Michael's, 7 in Sandridge, 13 in the St. Albans and Mid Herts Hospital, 2 in the Sisters' Hospital, and 31 in the Union Workhouse. Taking the population of the City, as estimated to the middle of 1902, to be 16,600, we have a death rate of 12·4 per thousand. But we have to take into consideration that 21 of the 31 deaths which occurred in the Workhouse, 8 of the 13 deaths in the General Hospital, and 1 of the 2 deaths in the Sisters' Hospital were of persons who did not belong to our City. There is also the case of a woman, a vagrant, who died suddenly in Holywell Hill as she was passing through the town. These 31 cases have to be deducted. Then we have to add 3 deaths of St. Albans people which took place in the Herts County Asylum, and 3 deaths in the Clare Hall Hospital for Small-pox at South Mymms. We deduct therefore 31 from 206, and add 6, when we get 181 as the corrected number of deaths for the year, and 10·9 as the true death-rate. This is the lowest death-rate we have had for at any rate the last 13 years, and in all

probability for a much longer period. I question indeed if we have ever had such a low death-rate in St. Albans. It shows, I venture to think, that the efforts we have been making for years past to improve the sanitary condition of the City have not been altogether void of result. In 1901 the total number of deaths was 244, the total death-rate 15, the corrected number of deaths 211, and the true death-rate 13. In 1900 the total death-rate was 16·3 and the true death-rate 13·7. During the last 12 years the average total death-rate was 15·8 and the corrected death-rate 14.

There were 19 deaths in January; 19 in February; 22 in March; 19 in April; 18 in May; 14 in June; 15 in July; 11 in August; 17 in September; 17 in October; 14 in November; and 21 in December. The healthiest months were August, June and November, while March and December had the highest mortality. Of the total deaths 24 only were of children under 1 year of age, giving us a death-rate for infants of 1·4. In 1901 the number of deaths amongst infants was 47, and the infantile death-rate 2·8, exactly double. Amongst children between 1 and 5 there were 21 deaths last year, as against 22 in 1901. There were 64 deaths of persons of 65 and upwards, as against 87 in 1901. There was therefore, a great decrease last year in the number of deaths amongst infants and aged people, a slight decrease in the deaths of older children, and an increase in the deaths amongst young and middle aged persons.

There were 10 deaths from Pneumonia, 28 from Bronchitis and Broncho-pneumonia, 4 from other Respiratory Diseases, making a total of 42 deaths from Diseases of the Respiratory System, as against 42 in 1901; 28 from Diseases of the Heart, as against 46, and 23 from Diseases of the Nervous System, as against 19 the year before. There were 12 deaths from Phthisis and 12 from other Tubercular Diseases, as against 18 from Phthisis and 8 from other Tubercular Maladies in 1901. The death-rate for Tubercle was therefore 1·4 as against 1·6 for the previous year. There were 14 deaths from Cancer and Malignant Diseases, as against 15 in 1901; giving a death-rate for Cancer of ·8, as against ·9 in the year immediately preceding.

There were 13 deaths from various Zymotic Diseases including 2 from Influenza, as against 27 the year before; but to this ought to be added 3 deaths from Small-pox which occurred in the Hospital at South Mymms. This gives us a Zymotic death-rate of .9, as against 1.6 in 1901. Despite the Small-pox Epidemic, our Zymotic death-rate in 1902 was little more than half what it was in 1901.

The death-rate for the principal Zymotic Diseases was .8, as against 1.5 in 1901. There were 6 deaths from Small-pox including the 3 at South Mymms, 3 from Scarlet Fever, 2 from Whooping Cough, 3 from Diphtheria, and 2 from Influenza.

There was a slight increase in the number of deaths from Diseases of the Nervous System, a slight decrease in those due to Tubercle, and Cancer; and a considerable decrease in the deaths from Diseases of the Heart, and from Zymotic Diseases.

There were 6 deaths from Accident or Violence during the year. In the month of February a newly-born female infant was found dead, owing to "Compression of the Brain, consequent upon fracture of the right parietal bone accidentally caused." In April a man aged 40 died at the Hospital in consequence of an "Accidental Fall from a cart at Napsbury Farm, causing fracture of the Spinal Column." Also in April a girl of 2 died in the Hospital from "Burns accidentally received." In May a female infant of 3 months died from "Compression of the Brain from being accidentally over-laid when in bed with her parents." In July a man aged 54, stated to be an attendant upon lunatics, died of a "Bullet Wound" And in October a boy of 2 years died at the Hospital from "Burns accidentally received."

During the year there were 11 Inquests held: One in March on a male child of one year, who died from "Acute Bronchitis and Collapse of the Lungs"; another in May on a boy aged 3, who died of "Ptomaine Poisoning after a meal of Mackerel"; another in August on a woman unknown, a vagrant, aged about 45, who died of "Syncope due to Atheroma of the Heart and large vessels"; another in September on a young woman of 23 who was found dead, death being due to "Syncope, Epilepsy, and Heart Disease"; another on a man of 62 who died from

“Atheroma and Cerebral Hæmorrhage”; and the other six on the cases of death from accident or violence mentioned above.

There were no uncertified deaths.

The death rates in the different divisions of the City were as follows :

St. Albans	-	-	-	9·8 per thousand.
St. Peter's	-	-	-	9·4 ,,
St. Michael's	-	-	-	10·4 ,,
Sandridge	-	-	-	7·7 ,,

During the year there were 356 births, 178 of males and 178 of females. Of these births 10 were illegitimate. There were 116 births in the Abbey district, 167 in St. Peter's, 50 in St. Michael's, 19 in Sandridge, and 4 in the Union Workhouse.

The birth rate for the year was 21·4. For 1901 the birth rate was 21·6.

The birth-rates in the different divisions of the City were as follows :

St. Albans	-	-	-	25·1 per thousand.
St. Peter's	-	-	-	19·1 ,,
St. Michael's	-	-	-	20· ,,
Sandridge	-	-	-	21·1 ,,

The proportion of illegitimate to legitimate births was 28·9 per thousand, as against 31·4 in 1901.

The rate of mortality amongst children under 1 year of age per thousand registered births was 67·4, which was exceedingly low. Last year it was 135·4. The infantile rate of mortality was indeed considerably lower than it has been for at least 13 years past, and probably for a much longer period, but I have not the data at hand for comparison. We have great reason to congratulate ourselves on the lowness of our mortality during the past year, and I trust we shall not in any way relax our efforts to promote the health and well-being of the community.

Infectious Diseases.

During the year 1902, 108 cases of Infectious Disease were notified to me, viz., 26 cases of Small-pox, 52 of Scarlet Fever, 5 of Diphtheria, 2 of Enteric Fever, 2 of Puerperal Fever, 9 of Erysipelas, 9 of Chicken-pox, and 3 of Tuberculosis. Of the Scarlet Fever cases 48 were removed to the Sisters' Hospital.

In 1901, 133 cases in all were notified, including 103 cases of Scarlet Fever and 17 of Diphtheria, while 84 cases of Scarlet Fever were admitted to the Sisters' Hospital.

I should be much obliged if the Medical Attendants, when notifying cases, would always insert the ages of the patients.

Small-pox.

A widely-spread and very severe epidemic of Small-pox visited London and most other parts of the country in the latter part of 1901, and the disease remained prevalent till the autumn of 1902. It was not likely that we should altogether escape, but under all the circumstances I think we were fortunate in not having suffered more severely. The disease was introduced into St. Albans at least seven separate times.

On the 6th of January a young man who had been working at Dartford, where there was a good deal of Small-pox, and who had come home to his wife and family from Saturday to Monday, was found to be suffering from the disease, and was sent to the Hospital at South Mymms. His wife and one unvaccinated child were vaccinated; the baby, the only other child, having been vaccinated some months before. There were no further cases.

On January 29th, a young man, who had been working at the erection of an additional building at the South Mymms Hospital, developed Small-pox, and was sent to South Mymms as a patient. The other inmates of the house, one of whom was unvaccinated, were all vaccinated. There was no spread of the disease.

About the middle of February I was informed by the Inspector of Nuisances that a man had been staying at the City Lodging House who was suspected of having Small-pox. I went to the Lodging House and found he had left that morning. I put the police at once on his track, and two days afterwards he was found at Aldenham suffering from Small-pox, and taken to the Watford Hospital. The Lodging House was ordered to be closed, and every endeavour was made to induce the inmates, some 36 in number, to be vaccinated. Nearly all however refused, or only consented when it was too late. In all 8 cases occurred amongst the people in the Lodging House, 5 of whom were taken to South Mymms, and 3 to a temporary Hospital in the Union grounds. Altogether, including two

men who managed to get away before the house was closed, and who turned up at St. Albans and Barnet Workhouses respectively, there were at least ten cases of Small-pox in all, and there were four deaths.

On March 29th a case of Chicken-pox was notified to me. I went to see the patient at once and found it was an undoubted case of Small-pox in an unvaccinated child. The patient was taken to the Temporary Hospital. All the other inmates of the houses were vaccinated and the house closed, but notwithstanding this two other children developed the disease and were also taken to the Hospital. Several other cases occurred in the neighbourhood, in the Bernard's Heath District just outside the City, and I believe all these cases were traceable to a woman who had a mild unrecognized attack of Small-pox and had been going about.

On April 4th a young man, the driver of a grocer's van, who had been delivering groceries in the neighbourhood of the South Mymm's Hospital was attacked by the disease. He was removed to Hospital and his wife and children vaccinated, but one of the latter developed Small-pox a few days afterwards in a mild form, and was also taken to Hospital.

Towards the middle of June two cases of Small-pox occurred in the Workhouse, and two days later two cases at the "Cock and Flower Pot" publichouse in Fishpool Street. The publichouse was at once closed and all the inmates vaccinated, but a third case occurred there five days' afterwards. The house was kept closed for three weeks. Everything possible was done to prevent the spread of the disease at the Workhouse, but two other cases occurred there in the end of the month. These last seven cases were all sent to the Hospital at South Mymms. I cannot but think that there was some connection between the cases at the Workhouse and at the "Cock and Flower Pot," but have been unable to trace it.

In the beginning of July two undertakers who had superintended the burial of a man who had died in a neighbouring district of unrecognized Small-pox, and was taken for burial to his parents' home at Colney Heath, were attacked by Small-pox. They were sent to the South Mymms Hospital and their families vaccinated.

All the houses from which Small-pox cases were taken,

8 in number, excluding the Workhouse, were thoroughly disinfected all over, and kept closed for at least 16 to 18 days, and the inmates compensated. This necessarily involved considerable expense, but I claim that the results show the money to have been well spent.

As the South Mymms Hospital was unable to take all our cases, we were obliged to treat 10 of them in a temporary Hospital in the Workhouse Grounds, which was worked in conjunction with the Guardians and the Rural District Council. The other 16 cases were taken to South Mymms. I earnestly trust that you will continue to retain the 3 beds at the South Mymms Hospital, which proved so useful to us last year. Even when we have a Hospital of our own it will be much better to send there any isolated Small-pox cases which may occur, and it will certainly be much more economical to do this than to open the Hospital for the reception of 1 or 2 cases only.

Scarlet Fever.

The epidemic of Scarlet Fever which prevailed in 1901 continued into 1902, but after January it diminished very much in severity, and although the disease continued with us, it cannot be said to have prevailed as an epidemic during the remainder of the year. There were 14 cases in January, 4 in February, 5 in March, 4 in April, 11 in May, 2 in June, 1 in July, 1 in August, 2 in September, 6 in October, and 2 in December; altogether 52 cases. There were 11 cases in the Abbey district, 30 in St. Peter's, 7 in St. Michael's, and 4 in the Union Workhouse.

There were 3 deaths from this disease.

Diphtheria.

There was 1 case of Diphtheria in the Abbey district, 2 in St. Peter's, 1 in St. Michael's, and 1 in Sandridge; 5 in all. They occurred in different parts of the City and at different times of the year, and were all apparently unconnected with each other. They were isolated as well as possible in their own homes.

There were 3 deaths.

Enteric Fever.

There were 2 cases of Enteric Fever notified during the year, both of which recovered. They were both apparently imported cases.

In April a death occurred which was certified as due to Tuberculosis following Typhoid Fever, the onset of the latter disease being put down as 4 months before the death; but as I had seen the case in December 1901, and was inclined to think at that time that it was a case of Tuberculosis, and as it had not been formally notified to me as Enteric, I think I am justified in not including it as a death from that disease.

Puerperal Septicæmia.

There were 2 cases of this disease notified to me, both on the same day, in the same street, and within a few doors of each other, but after careful enquiry, I was unable to detect any connection between them. One of them was fatal. Another death occurred in November certified as from Puerperal Peritonitis.

Influenza.

There were a number of cases of Influenza in the early part of the year, but they were mostly of a mild description, and the epidemic could not be called a severe one.

Whooping Cough.

There was a good deal of Whooping Cough during the year, and 2 deaths occurred from this cause, 1 in February and the other in December.

Measles.

There was no death from Measles in 1902.

I feel it my duty, however, once more to urge you to make Measles a disease notifiable under the Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act. When Measles become epidemic it often carries off a number of young children, and when it does not prove directly fatal, in many cases it predisposes them to the attacks of other diseases such as Tuberculosis, and a serious epidemic might often be prevented by your Medical Officer having timely notice of the first cases which occur, and being able consequently to exclude children, coming from infected households from

School, and to take such other measures as might to him seem desirable. During the last 13 years there have been in St. Albans more than twice as many deaths from Measles as from Scarlet Fever. It is quite a mistake to suppose, as so many people do, that Measles is a slight and trivial ailment, which all children must necessarily contract, and which may be lightly regarded. On the contrary, Measles, especially in very young children, is often most serious, and when not directly fatal, may lay the foundation for grave disease in the future; and there is no earthly reason why children should necessarily have Measles, any more than they must of necessity take Scarlet Fever or Diphtheria. In those towns where notification of Measles has been adopted the results have been satisfactory. I have felt very strongly on this subject for a good many years, and this recommendation has been an annual one ever since my appointment. I would call attention to the fact that the Hertfordshire County Council at a recent Meeting, passed a resolution recommending District Councils throughout the County, to include Measles amongst the number of notifiable diseases.

Epidemic Diarrhœa.

There were no deaths in 1902 from Summer or Epidemic Diarrhœa. This is no doubt mainly due to the absence of any continued hot weather last summer, so that the conditions were unfavourable for the development of this disease. Still it is satisfactory, as there were 15 deaths attributed to this cause in 1901.

Tuberculosis.

During the year there were 12 deaths from Phthisis or Tuberculosis of the lungs, and 12 deaths from other Tubercular diseases, making 24 in all, as against 26 in 1901. The death-rate from Phthisis was $\cdot 7$, and from Tubercle $1\cdot 4$ as against $1\cdot 1$ and $1\cdot 6$ respectively in the previous year. This is undoubtedly a slight improvement. I trust that the voluntary notification of Phthisis, and the disinfection of premises after the occurrence of a death from Phthisis, will do something to modify the extension of this disease.

Cancer.

There were 14 deaths from Cancer in 1902, and the death-rate from this disease was $\cdot 8$. In 1901 there were 16 deaths, and the death-rate was $\cdot 9$.

The Sisters' Hospital.

I am pleased to be able to report that my recommendations as to the erection of a proper discharge room at the Sisters' Hospital, as well as the provision of two bathrooms for the patients, and the heating of the corridors, have been agreed to by the Joint Committee. The work is now in progress and will, I trust, be completed very shortly. These alterations and additions will very materially enhance the usefulness of the Hospital.

New Hospital at Redbourn.

The Corporation have not yet come to a decision as to the Hospital to be erected on their ground at Redbourn, but the matter will be brought before them again for consideration very shortly, and I trust it will not be long before the plans for the New Hospital are passed, and the building is commenced. I think there ought not to be less than 3 Hospital Blocks in addition to the administration block, and the out-buildings. There should be a block for Diphtheria containing 2 wards, with 10 to 12 beds in all; another of the same size for Enteric; and a third rather larger, with from 12 to 18 or 20 beds for emergencies, which could be used as a Small-pox Hospital in case of need, though I hope it would not be often wanted for that purpose. For if we keep on the 3 beds we have at the South Mymms Hospital, which I should strongly advise, they would be able not only to receive isolated cases, but also to deal with small out-breaks, where the disease could be confined within moderate limits. I trust that it will not be long before the new Hospital is erected, especially as there is a great demand in the district for additional Hospital Accommodation for Infectious Diseases, especially for the reception of cases of Diphtheria.

Water Supply.

During the past year, in spite of the lowness of the level of the water in the chalk, partly caused by the

deficiency of the winter rainfall for some years past, and partly by the continually increasing quantity abstracted for the consumption of London, we have had a plentiful supply of pure and wholesome water.

Drainage and Sewerage.

The drainage of the City is carried out in the usual thorough and efficient manner. Owing to the fault of the Contractors there has been some considerable delay in completing the Bacteria Beds at the Sewage Farm. As they are only just finished, it is rather too soon to express a positive opinion as to whether they will prove an unqualified success. I think, however, that it will be found necessary to make a few little additions and alterations, and when that is done I trust that the result will be satisfactory.

Cowsheds.

The various cowsheds within the City have been regularly inspected during the year, and I have to report that their cleanliness, ventilation, air space, drainage, etc., are satisfactory. The Veterinary Inspector is especially careful in ordering the separation from the others of cows suffering from Tuberculosis of the Udder, and in prohibiting the sale of the milk of such cows.

Ashes and Refuse.

I would again forcibly impress upon you the necessity of collecting ashes and refuse from every house within the City at least twice a week. In the central parts of the town, and especially in the poorer neighbourhoods, where the accommodation for the ashes is very limited, a daily collection should be made. There is no more fruitful source of disease, than the fermentation and putrefaction of organic matter in the immediate vicinity of houses. The dust carts used in St Albans are ordinary carts furnished with an oil cloth covering—which, judging from my own observations, is hardly ever used. Proper dust carts, with fixed covers, ought to be provided in order to minimise the danger of diffusing through the air particles of organic dust which in many cases might contain infection.

Common Lodging Houses.

I have visited the various Common Lodging Houses within the City at different times throughout the year, and have found them on the whole clean and well kept. Judging from the information I have received they have not been overcrowded.

Factories and Workshops.

Under the Factories and Workshops' Act of 1901, I have visited the different Factories and Workshops within the City. As the result of my inspection I have to report that on the whole they are all clean and sufficiently ventilated, and that in most of them the air-space allowed is sufficient. There were however a few cases of overcrowding, and in a certain number of other cases the w.c. accommodation provided was insufficient. Still with the majority of them there was very little fault to find. Measures will be taken to ensure that the defects mentioned above will be promptly remedied.

Bakehouses.

I have visited all the Bakehouses within the City, and have found them on the whole in a fairly satisfactory condition. There are, however, some eight underground bakehouses which, under the New Factories and Workshops' Act cannot be used after January 1st, 1904, unless a certificate of suitability as regards construction, light, ventilation, etc., be given by the District Council. I cannot advise the Council to grant such certificates unless stringent conditions are fulfilled, which will involve very considerable alterations in all those underground bakehouses.

Amongst the most important of the conditions which I would suggest, taken from the Recommendations of the Society of Medical Officers of Health, are the following:—

1. No under-ground bakehouse shall be less than 8ft. in height, or of a cubic capacity under 1,500ft.
2. The Floor shall be constructed of hard, smooth, and impervious material.
3. The walls shall be constructed of a material hard, smooth, durable, and impervious to damp.

4. The ceiling shall be even and impermeable to damp and dust.

5. Every underground bakehouse shall be approached by a suitable staircase, properly lighted and ventilated.

6. Any opening into the shop above must be so covered as to prevent the access of dust.

7. The underground bakehouse must be adequately lighted with daylight throughout.

8. Ventilation must be adequate, provision being made for the removal of steam. This will probably require the provision of some mechanical appliance.

9. Flour or fuel must not be stored in any underground bakehouse, etc.

I would suggest that a Committee be formed to draw out a list of regulations and requirements which must be complied with, before the Council will give the necessary certificate authorising the use of any underground bakehouse after Jan. 1st., 1904. When this is done a copy of these regulations should be sent to the owner of any underground bakehouse, with a letter asking him what he proposes to do, in order to make his bakehouse comply with the requirements of the Council, and telling him that if he fails to do so, a certificate will not be given. It will be necessary to be very careful in granting those certificates, as there is no provision in the Act for revoking a licence when once given.

It is important to note that under the Factories and Workshops Act, 1901, no underground bakehouse can be used which was not in use at the time of the passing of the Act.

Slaughter Houses.

I have visited during the past year all the Slaughter Houses within the City, and have to report that they are on the whole clean and well kept. I cannot, however, but regard the continued existence of these slaughter houses, nearly all of them situated in the most central and most thickly populated parts of the town, as constituting a serious danger to the community. It is almost impossible to keep a slaughter house in a populous neighbourhood, closely surrounded by houses, so that it shall not be, sometimes at any rate, a nuisance to the people living in these houses, and I believe to some extent a source of danger to their

health. For this reason I must again recommend you as I have done on many previous occasions to consider seriously the question of erecting a public Abattoir, in a suitable situation, which would be under the direct supervision and control of your own officers.

There is one slaughter house the licence for which I should advise you not to renew. It is situated in a back yard with houses crowded round it, in the very centre of our city, and it is not required, as the proprietor has another slaughter house, and indeed it is very seldom used.

Overcrowding.

My attention was called in the latter part of the year, to some cases of overcrowding in Watson's Row. I visited the cottages 2 or 3 times and succeeded in making arrangements for the abatement of the overcrowding, without taking the matter into Court.

I have visited all the different parts of the City during the year, but have found nothing, except what is previously mentioned, that seems to call for special comment.

I beg to thank His Worship the Mayor, the Aldermen, and all the Members of the Council for their uniform courtesy and consideration.

My thanks are also due to the Town Clerk, the Surveyor, and the Inspector of Nuisances for their valuable assistance and willing co-operation.

I am, gentlemen,

Your Most Obedient Servant,

JOHN MORISON, M.D., D.P.H.,

Medical Officer of Health.

February 10th, 1903.